

Railway surgeons are not essentially different, as human beings, from other sorts of surgeons; but no small portion of their work is different. They not only see a good deal of emergency surgery, which must be studied in the light of numerous exigencies that do not present themselves in the ordinary course of surgical work, but they occupy a dual position of responsibility that is sometimes misunderstood. They are responsible to the patient, of course; and equally, of course, they have a responsible relation to the railway companies they serve. It is therefore with particular pleasure that the JOURNAL announces the establishment of a department of railway surgery which will be devoted to the doings of the Pacific Association of Railway Surgeons, and to items of interest connected with that Association. And, be it said in passing, the Association, which was born some six years ago, has attained a sturdy growth and come into vigorous life. It numbers several hundred members and in its membership represents every railroad on the Pacific and every state in this territory. Already work has begun on the program for the next meeting (to be held in San Francisco in August, 1909), and it promises to be the best the Association has yet presented. Any railway surgeon on the Coast who does not belong to the Association, but would like to join, should apply to the secretary, Dr. G. R. Carson, Flood Building, San Francisco.

So much awful piffle has been written on the "sexual life" and the "sexual question" and the so-called "social evil" (as though there were but one only social evil!) that it is distinctly refreshing to find an author expressing views that are based on plain, ordinary common sense. We are so hedged about and trammelled with laws, written or unwritten, that are founded on the superstitions or the religions of our bygone ancestors—or even on their belly-aches and their bad dreams—that probably the vast majority of people look upon it as a crime to express any views contrary to these arbitrary, and often vicious, fixed standards. But now comes one who is not afraid to think in terms of common sense, who is not afraid to make his clear thinking into a book.\*

While human passions last there will be, as there always has been, prostitution in some form. Books of preachments have been written about it, but "So-called moral sermons lead to nothing in this domain." So long as we are blind to actual facts that exist, we can make mighty little progress; few writers on the subject have ventured to state many actual facts that find expression by Forel. "A peculiarity of the sexual appetite in man, which is fatal for society, is his desire for change. This desire is not only one of the principal causes of polygamy,

but also of prostitution and other analogous organizations." But it is useless to try and quote all the sane remarks of Forel; they would fill many issues of the JOURNAL.

It is not always the large community that sets the example in doing things. Elsewhere is the report of a meeting of the Placer County Society in which is given a resume of the work of stamping out malaria in Auburn. It is a sermon in a very few words and one which we should take to heart. For malaria, typhoid, smallpox or diphtheria to exist in a community in these days is a disgrace to human intelligence. They do exist because the people do not understand what they mean, nor how easy it is to get rid of them. Let the people once know exactly the truth about these preventable diseases and they will demand legislative aid in stamping them out; let the people know what we are striving for through our local and state health boards and through our medical law, and they will demand the fullest support from the legislature. There have been enough public meetings held during the past six months to show pretty conclusively what the temper of the people is when these things are explained to them. It's a case of dollars or lives, hogs or children, and the people are only just beginning to realize that fact. The greatest asset of any nation is the health of its citizens; without that factor, all the potential wealth of a country is as nothing. We have gone blindly on ignoring that fact for a very long time, and now we are coming to a change. Natural resources are receiving attention at every hand, and the greatest of them all—public health—is receiving its share with daily growing interest. And it is time that it should be so. Let the merchant see just where and how much he is injured by the presence of these preventable diseases, and he will soon perceive the economy of doing away with them. The problem is by no means so difficult as it would appear; its solution is in the awakening of the people.

#### SMALL PLACES DO GREAT THINGS.

#### THE SKIN REACTION AFTER THE USE OF TUBERCULIN OINTMENT.\*

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This article is based on personal observations made in 100 patients on whom I have made 123 inunctions with tuberculin ointment and 45 control inunctions with various bacterial preparations which will be indicated later. Sixty-two positive reactions were observed and studied. The great majority of these cases were definitely tubercular, as proven by the various well established means of diagnosis and were chosen mainly through a desire to see a large number of examples of the eruption and to observe its nature and note, if possible, any variations.

Dermatologically the subject is of very great interest and the work has suggested many questions for investigation. All observers have noted the

\* The Sexual Question: a scientific, physiological, hygienic and sociological study for the cultured classes. By August Forel. English adaptation by C. F. Marshall. New York: The Rebman Company.

\* Read before the San Francisco County Medical Society